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Notes of the Month.

THE special services held at Downpatrick and Rademon on April 1st proved very successful, and at each of these places the Moderator had a good congregation. The local hearers were helped by the presence of friends from a distance, thus making possible that wider co-operation which is so essential to us as an organised church. A further example of the same kind will be forthcoming on May 13th, when members of the four congregations of Antrim, Ballyclare, Crumlin, and Templepatrick will unite in worship at the last-named place. The service is being well advertised, and there is every prospect, given fair weather, of a very large and representative gathering. Through an error the service was announced in a recent issue of this magazine for the first Sunday in May. We wish it to be noted, however, that the actual date is May 13th. Of course other friends not belonging to the four uniting congregations will be heartily welcomed by those responsible for the united service.

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One of our annual gatherings which is always eagerly anticipated by a large number of our readers is the Sunday School Conference. It is by now well established in popular favour as a pleasant and profitable celebration. The fact that it is to be held on June 2nd in Templepatrick will ensure the continuance of its popularity, for it is not only a very delightful centre for such a meeting, but is not too far away for most of our members. We therefore confidently expect an excellent attendance. The Convener (Rev. S. E. Bowen) can be trusted to make the best possible arrangements for reaching Templepatrick in good time, and on the most reasonable terms.

* *

Many of our readers have doubtless noted with much satisfaction the announcement of a most generous contribution made to Queen's University, Belfast, by Mr. Henry Musgrave. That announcement was made at a meeting of the Senate by the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Hamilton, and he quite fittingly dwelt, not only upon the munificence of the donor, but also upon the timely character of the donation. There is bound to be a great increase in our commercial intercourse with Russia after

the war. The latter country may prove, given energy on our part, a most important market for our goods. Those not primarily interested in commerce may be attracted by the possibility of making direct approach to one of the greatest of modern literatures. The founding of the chair in the Russian Language and Literature will undoubtedly facilitate both those objects. All honour, therefore, to Mr. Henry Musgrave, whose liberality and prescience have made the desirable possible.

* *

The continuance of the war, and the increased demand for national services is naturally affecting members of our congregations. Some of our young people have taken up munition work, others have volunteered for the Women's Land Army, while the V.A.D. is attracting an increasing number. While such services do affect both school and church by making attendance difficult, and in some cases impossible, nevertheless we can only give our hearty encouragement to any who feel a desire to help their country at a time of great crisis. When their period of service is over, and they can return again to the ordinary avocations of normal times, we shall welcome them all the more gladly because of their self-sacrificing labours.

* *

America's decision to place herself definitely on the side of the Allies found nowhere heartier approval than in the North of Ireland. The links between us here and friends in America has been ever close and cordial. Members of our congregation have from time to time gone to make their home in the West, and we still think of them as ours in blood and sympathy, just as they keep green the memory of their homeland. It seems, therefore, for that reason, and for other reasons, that we should be united in the prosecution of the war. America's official decision, in fact, only makes open what was known to us before, viz., the hearty approval of our cause by many Americans we knew and respected. Evidence of this was apparent in the fact that soon after the momentous decision was arrived at, Dr. Samuel A. Eliot, President of the American Unitarian Association, cabled to Essex Hall a message received by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association on Good Friday—"Pledged to united and resistless endeavour, we send our glad and solemn salutations to our comrades who have borne the burden of the great conflict and upheld the banners of freedom and humanity."

* *

Speaking of Essex Hall reminds us, and we would in turn remind our readers, of the Lawrence House Social Centre for Soldiers and Sailors, which is now established at Essex Hall. Its object is to provide a comfortable calling place and temporary residence for any of our soldiers and sailors whose journeys take them to London. It has recently been opened, through the generous support of many friends, and notably through a very handsome benefaction from the family whose name the new institution bears. Its value will consist in its increasing usefulness, and we therefore urge our readers to make its purpose known to any who can avail themselves of the great advantages it has to offer. To such it should prove a great boon.

A Thought for the Month

"Piety and Morality Inseparable."

TEXT:—"What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Matthew xix. 6.

QUOTATION:—"Piety, that it may become truth and reality, demands morality as its fulfilment, as the only concrete element in which the idea of fellowship with God is realized; morality, that it may find its perfect unfolding, requires the aid of piety, in the light of which alone it can comprehend its own idea in all its breadth and depth."—RICHARD ROTHE.

PROSELYTISM.

THERE is a saying of Christ about the religious teachers of his time, who compassed sea and land to make one proselyte, and that end attained, rendered the convert tenfold more the child of hell than themselves. The words are none the less terrible for their familiarity. Christ did not approve of that form of religious propaganda which consists mainly in destroying the religious and moral code in which the convert has been trained from childhood, without any substitute adequate to bear the strain of daily life. Still less would he have approved that wholly base cult of the loaves and fishes, which seeks to work a change in religious conviction by the prospect of temporal advantages. These were not the means by which he sought to spread his teaching. The prospects he held out to his converts were not alluring. Those who would follow him must sell all that they had, sacrifice possessions, friends, everything. Followers of Christ in more modern days have not always adopted this method. They have sometimes preferred the bait of the loaves and fishes, hoping thus to win souls for the Master. The intention was no doubt good, but was the method desirable? In Ireland it has had one not altogether satisfactory result. It has given an excuse for the suspicion with which every effort at social work, especially in the form of "relief" is regarded by the Catholic Church. Any one who has taken even a small part in such work must have met this suspicion, not always groundless in times past, whatever may be the case to-day. No Protestant relief worker may visit homes of Catholic girls without incurring this charge of proselytism; but for this the zealous Protestants, who in times past used these opportunities as a means of spreading the light, have only themselves to thank. That light, in the opinion of the devout Catholic, was spiritual darkness, blighting the soul, and the attempt to spread it surreptitiously by means of philanthropic work has left an ineffaceable resentment. It will be long before the harm done in earlier times by such activities is overcome.

Are we, then, to attempt any religious propaganda? Are we only to meet Sunday after Sunday in our comfortable churches, and listen to able discourses setting out the truths on which we all agree? Has the Christian command, "Go forth and teach all men" no application to us? In other words, ought we not to attempt any form of proselytism? The loaves and fishes method stands self-condemned. Another method, by which the sincere followers of other faiths are outraged, is equally alien to the spirit of Christ. I think it is Kipling who tells how a certain missionary, in his zeal for the Gospel, rushed into a heathen temple, and belaboured with his sun umbrella the gorgeous idol before which hundreds of worshippers were kneeling. The result was not encouraging for the believers in this form of propaganda. If, then, we should not actually interfere with the sincere convictions of others, and still less seek to attract them by inducements of good things to be had, what way is to be found? The umbrella method has been discredited, whether followed publicly by holding outdoor services in Catholic quarters, or by attacking our Catholic friends. What remains? Just a steady, persistent effort to spread a knowledge of the Unitarian faith, of what it is, and also, an important aspect of the matter, what it is not. This duty should not be left to the clergy only. A root defect in the Catholic system is just this very professionalism, this relegating of everything appertaining to religion to the priests.

Our first duty, as lay members of a Protestant Church, if we have any right to the name of Protestant at all, is to understand the faith that is in us, and to see that the children understand it. We have the most unfortunate fear of what we call dogmatic religious teaching. As convinced Unitarians, we should see to it that the children growing up in our midst understand how and why we differ from other Churches. We do not want

to teach a Unitarian creed ; we have no cut and dried set of dogmas, labelled "these believe and you will be saved." But we do want an intelligent understanding of our Unitarian position with regard to the Bible, to the Founder of Christianity, to our belief in the Eternal Life, and to other lesser matters. The laity, men and women, should support the Church by their presence in it. Half empty churches are not effective as propaganda, even if the excuse can be made that the very popular minister is away, and only a substitute forthcoming. The present writer has often reflected on the very practical form of pledge taken by the members of the Catch-my-pal Societies. These converts to a "militant" temperance not only bind themselves to abstain from intoxicants, but undertake to induce others to do the same. Pledge-taking is alien to our Unitarian traditions and ways of thinking, but a real determination to attend church whenever possible, and to persuade others to do so, would work a change in our averages of attendance if adopted by many members. Further, there are forms of public religious propaganda open to none of the objections levelled against the methods of the umbrella or the loaves. The public Press is open to all, and no unfairness is involved in the use of its columns for spreading our religious belief. Again, this is a matter which should not be left to the clergy alone. Could not the larger churches have a special official, whose duty it would be to obtain publicity for the church activities? It has been done, of course, in every church, but sometimes it might be greatly developed. To wave a Unitarian flag, or beat a Unitarian drum, would be contrary to all our traditions. But the general public needs to know what our churches do, the endless service rendered in so many different ways, the view of religious and moral questions that we hold. These are to be found in our denominational papers, but are only read there by the converted. Let us try for publicity. True, we are told that our right hand should not know what our left hand doeth, but we are also told to let our light shine before men. Unitarians may be said to have sometimes neglected this latter precept.

Let us each then be, not flying buttresses of the Church, permanently outside the structure, but supporters from the inside. Numbers attract, and the wayfarer in search of a fold will not be inclined to join that band of worshippers who are obviously unable to draw their own adherents within their gates. Further, let the committees and the members of the churches see to it that the Sunday School is adequately staffed, for there is the strength of the future Church. The Catholics show us our duty in this respect. There is no underestimate of the importance of early religious education in that communion. Then let us individual members take the trouble to understand what is our faith, why we hold it, and let us be prepared to defend, and, what is more necessary, explain it, when opportunity serves. It has often been said that Unitarianism is the Church of the future. This proud title cannot be realised unless it be a living Church in the present ; and this present life depends on the congregation more than on the preacher. A sacerdotal church may be maintained by a priesthood. A free Christian and undogmatic Church must live by the faith and devotion of its laity, as well as by the enthusiasm and single-minded service of the clergy.

DORA MELLONE.

IN LETTERS FROM A Y.M.C.A. HUT IN FRANCE.

Sept. 23.—We get a small number of men by train in the middle of the nights. Two nights ago there were twelve visitors at two o'clock, including three officers—one of them Major Sir C. E. The trio went to sleep on chairs after a cup of tea (*i.e.* a *very thick mug* of it), for which, and a few biscuits apiece, they insisted on paying three francs! . . . They got breakfast elsewhere, but before starting off by train they came in to thank me for the fire and the cup of tea. . . .

25.—Last night there were a few more visitors—about twelve o'clock. Among them was a Captain in a Scottish regiment, who slept—in his own apparatus, supplemented by *my* rug—on the floor of my "dining-room." Most of the officers go to a neighbouring hotel—of rather a one-horse species, I imagine—for their breakfast. But this one condescended not only to share my wash-basin—size of a pie-dish—but had breakfast with me as well.

27.—Among the troops who came to the hut the night before last was a jovial-looking old boy, with grey hair, and a front tooth gone.

Q. What age are you?

A. 51, sir. (He looked more like 61; he had stated 45 at the time he had enlisted.)

Q. Were you in the Army before the war?

A. No, sir; I joined after the war begun.

Q. It seems to suit you well enough.

A. (Laughing)—Oh, me, sir; yes, I'm all right, sir.

Q. What part of England do you belong to?

A. Any part, sir; no part in particler.

Q. You've been a rover, then?

(He had been a superior railway navvy, and now belonged to a tunnelling party. He narrated how two generals had come round, with a young officer between them, and how the said young "orficer" asked him his age.)

A. Nineteen, sir.

Q. But what's your *real* age?

A. I'm fifty-one, sir. (Whereupon the young officer slapped him on the back; and he found out afterwards that he was the Prince of Wales.)

Three minutes after his tea and cake he was lying on his back, having appropriated the small platform at the end of the hut, already composed for sleep, others being scattered on the floor, and one of them on a table. In the morning, whilst the rest were shaving, the old chap was still in the same posture; I don't think he had stirred an inch; and when roused he got up half dazed and almost too stiff to walk.

Last night I had thirty men—half a dozen early and the rest late. Some of the latter asked for lemonade, and were delighted to learn that they could have hot tea. One of them sang out: "After this I shall always remember the Y.M.C.A." "How's that?" I asked. "Because they've saved my life so many times," he replied, cheerily.

Yesterday I saw one of our æroplanes fall like a silver star through the blue sky and the sunshine—"fini," as Edmond Hubert, one of my boy-neighbours, explained. Some days the air is almost continuously buzzy with our biplanes. They are wonderful things, and even beautiful in their way of going. But already I take almost as little notice of them as of rooks or swallows.

October 1.—This morning I was carried off in a Y.M.C.A. motor car to lead a service in a town about eight kilometres distant. It was in a building rented by the Y.M.C.A.—one of many apartments therein. The congregation consisted of some three dozen men, mainly of the flying corps. There was a piano, but no one could play it, so the men had to lead the singing—that is to say, one or another led the rest of us.

There was an artillery man in the hut this morning, going unexpectedly on leave after twelve months' continuous service in France. He is looking forward to meeting an elder brother, long ago taken prisoner by the Germans, but having since succeeded in escaping. This youth, for he looks little more, has been in plenty of danger—"fed up with it"—having seen many horses and men killed, and two of his comrades decapitated by shells. But he looks very healthy and very cheerful—doubtless the more so in the prospect of ten days in "blighty." It is at least 19 months since his relatives last saw him, as he was sent across direct after seven months' training. It will be a pleasant surprise to them to see him "land home."

6.—At seven o'clock yesterday morning I finished forty-eight hours, including only five in bed (the five being in two spells, both within the second dozen hours). During the last twenty-four

I was on my feet and *on the go* the whole time, except when I was taking my own meals, four in number, occupying in the aggregate twenty-five minutes, mostly taken on foot and on the move. At 6-30 on Sunday evening I led a service in the parlour—sermon prepared (partly in a sitting posture, it is true) in spare (?) minutes in the *dead* of the previous very *lively* night. There were twenty of us for the service, including sixteen whom I quite easily collected from groups at the tables from among something like a hundred men in the hut—writing letters, talking, *playing dominoes and the piano, etc., etc.*

The officers are wonderfully civil, and considerate, and appreciative, for anything I (*i.e.* Y.M.C.A.) does, or tries to do, for them or for their men. Their courteous manner has not ceased to surprise me. It is well for people to know this, for when it is contrasted with what one has heard of the brutal manner of the Prussian snobs, it is enough to make one proud of our own true gentlemen. The men are also highly appreciative. There are a few unmannerly ones among them, but hardly any rude ones. The majority, from whatever rank of civilian life, among those whom I have seen in my own hut, are wonderfully agreeable and grateful. They seemed quite distressed to see me labouring (a little) with a tray of sixteen lumbering mugs, whilst one of them turned the tap of the tea-urn. Last night the tap business was performed by a colonel, three lieutenants rivalling each other in efforts to assist me, or in will to do more than there was to do. Those four slept in the middle bunks with four "of the ranks" above and four beneath them. . . . The first night since I left home, that has given me eight hours of bed (rising within that interval only thrice besides the tea time; and I slept every time I went to bed again.)

October 14.—Interesting conversation with two enthusiasts freshly come from England—enthusiasts about soldiering and everything else—and thoroughly enjoyed talking to me about gas-drill, tree-felling, and trees, and timber, corn stacks, and harvesting, etc. After that a socialist Scot came and read me "Tam O'Shanter" and the "Mouse," and joined in a debate on alcohol with two others who were believers in it—one in particular.

The orderlies speak very funny French, and are not at all bashful about it—one of them, at all events. He often recounts some of his speeches. I sent him to get an account settled, telling him to get Madame P. to put her name to it. He brought back word that she was a very independent sort of person, and refused to favour him with her signature. So he said, "Mersew Canteen parlay-vood vot-ra nomb," but she merely replied, "San-Fairy Anne, San Fairy Anne."

21.—A Glasgow man has just asked me for paper and envelope, as he desired to write to "me best gurrel, me sweet harrt, the best gurrel in th' worrild . . —me mither." She has three sons—"all oot heere."

. . . got up at one a.m.—just rescued the parlour fire and re-heated the tea-urn in time for five men, followed at an interval by twelve others. During said interval struggled hard with the expiring fire in the hut-stove, nearly choking it in the attempt, during which operation the hut became mysteriously filled (more or less) by upwards of forty other men, who relieved me of the struggle, and lit the third stove into the bargain. It was the weirdest sight—these dusky, khaki warriors, like a crowd of spirits in sheol, in the dim light of a single lamp at one end of the hut, and a single candle at the other. But these were not all. About half-past three a dozen or so of Australians, and other stragglers and strays, from that time onwards came in fours, and fives, and couples. The said Australians were rather rowdy, but jolly, joky, happy, friendly souls. They had been billeted hard by for the night. I had seen them in the hut before nightfall. Their officers had ordered them to be got up at 3 o'clock to be ready for the road by four; but it was a "false alarm," for they did not leave till after nine as it happened. I did not hear any one abused for the mistake.

There was a good deal of buzzy-ness of our biplanes to-day. When flying comparatively low they look very much like themselves ; when higher they look more like birds ; when fairly high up, and glittering in bright sunshine, they resemble dragonflies. When very high they look like white doves ; not so high, and in the subdued light of evening, they look like black crows. One evening there was a flock of eight of them. I have seen quite as many as twelve of them at one time in different directions. There were two or three "allimans" (*alias* taubes—by tommies also called "torbs") being shelled by anti-aircraft guns. The white smoke of our bursting shells looks like great shattered pearls in the azure sky, gradually fading into dreams of the same thing and disappearing as if forgotten at the end of sleep. Sometimes one may see as many as fifty of the shattered pearls in one region of the sky, at a considerable height in it.

October 25.—Within thirty-six hours or so several thousand men have been in the hut. For forty-eight hours I have not been unclad, or unshod. In the first twenty-four I had no supper, and in the latter twenty-four I had no dinner.

26.—In the nocturnal morning of yesterday the hut was occupied by a party of about forty officers, who bought tins of cigarettes and sardines, cups of coffee, chunks of buttered roll, small cakes, and packets of biscuits, etc. During the day I cut up into 240 penny pieces, split and buttered, 30 French rolls. . . . The men are very thankful for bread sometimes. Many of them casting hungry eyes onto the counter, and discovering my clumsy chunks, ask me for a "sandwich," sometimes for "two sandwiches."

November 25.—Before dinner I had an interesting visitor in the person of a young soldier who, as having distinguished himself, had figured in the "Mirror." It was an odd sensation to see him produce from his pocket a portrait of himself which I had seen, and remembered seeing, in that paper.

A man who was recently on leave says he will not go on leave again, even if the war should last two years longer. He found the *leave taking* on return to duty was such a severe ordeal. It made him weep copiously to see such a change come over his mother within twelve months. She was inclined to be stout a year ago, now "she is as thin as a box of sardines"!

QUESTIONS CONCERNING BELIEF AND CONDUCT.

XII. KNOWLEDGE AND FAITH.

Q. 92.—As Christians, what certain knowledge have we concerning God?

A. 92.—We have no positive knowledge of God. The Christian religion is a matter of faith, not of knowledge ; whilst some religions (including the Christian religion as held by some persons) must be said to be matter not of faith, but of mere belief or superstition.

Q. 93.—What is the difference between these things—*knowledge* and *faith*, and *belief* and *superstition?*

A. 93.—*Belief* is the conclusion that a statement is true, after a sincere attempt at reasoning that it is so. *Superstition* is a conclusion arrived at without an attempt at reasoning ; it might be called *unreasonable belief*. *Faith* is belief with desire ; it might be called *eager belief*. *Knowledge* is reasonable belief in the apparent absence of an alternative possibility ; it might be called *indisputable* or *unassailable belief* ; but a belief that was unassailable in one age has sometimes been disputed and refuted in another ; so that what was knowledge in a former age has ceased to be knowledge in a later.

Q. 94.—Is not our belief in the Spirit we call God at least an unassailable belief at present?

A. 94.—No. It is a reasonable belief, because it explains many other things which seem to be facts concerning our existence. But there is an alternative explanation which is accepted by some people who profess to prefer it. For instance, *we* say, that although we have not seen God at any time, He has

revealed Himself to our spirits; that we have spiritually discerned His existence; we say that when we do wrong and are ashamed, that is because we feel ourselves reproved by God; whilst *they say*, "you are mistaken; the cause of your shame is nothing but the fear of consequences at the hands of those you wrong, or those who will condemn you for wronging them." Again, *we* think that it is God who requires us to deal righteously with our fellow men, and that is why we consider conduct a matter of extreme importance; but others say, "that is another mistake. The importance of conduct depends entirely upon the determination of the community to prevent unrighteousness as far as possible, as that is the only condition upon which community life would be worth having."

Q. 95.—In the face of such adverse arguments, is it possible for doubt to be overcome with faith?

A. 95.—Assuredly faith should triumph; for although the uncertainty of the grounds of belief does result abundantly in unbelief, the doubter or denyer is no better qualified to claim the knowledge of his facts. Both experience and observation of those who live by faith make the arguments of assailants insufficient. Such shame for wrong-doing as the former confess, and such honour for righteousness as they profess, could not spring from and depend upon mere fear and esteem of the opinion and action of men of like passions with themselves; whilst in proportion as disbelief in God becomes general in any society, instances of ungodliness are apt to multiply.

But faith is more natural than mere belief; for *desire* to believe becomes in itself a *reason* for belief. So great is the desire for religious belief in some cases, that the result might be described as *superstitious faith*, since true faith is reasonable belief coupled with desire, whereas the belief of many would seem to be desire to believe without the desire or ability to reason, to be the only real effect in what we describe, on insufficient ground, as a sensation of the spirit. Once more, although it is true that belief in some mysterious "power, not ourselves," seems universal, the very diversity of conjecture as to its actual character as evidenced in the multiplicity of the religions of the world, might be advanced as a cause for doubt of its reality; so that the very faith in the will of God as "the Power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness," to reveal Himself to the spirits of mankind, may be delusion.

Q. 95.—In the face of so much room for doubt, and of so much lack of knowledge, is there any room for belief or faith?

A. 95.—Obviously there is room for faith, inasmuch as the alternative possibilities with which it may be assailed cannot themselves be proved as facts proving the nonexistence of the human spirit and of God. But the uncertainty of the grounds of belief does not result abundantly in unbelief. Faith is more natural than mere belief; for *desire* to believe becomes in itself a *reason* for belief. So great is the desire for religious belief in some cases, that the belief entertained might be described as a *superstitious faith;* since true faith is a reasonable belief coupled with desire, whereas the belief of many would seem to be desire to believe without the desire or ability to reason.

Q. 96.—What different kinds of unbelievers are there?

A. 96.—Unbelievers are called *agnostics* and *atheists;* the former being *those who do not know*, saying that it is impossible to know that there is a divine Spirit or a human spirit; atheists being *those who are without a God*, saying that there is no God. In reality, all of us must concede to agnostics that we do not and cannot *know;* but as we have seen, that does not make it impossible for all of us to believe and have faith. Atheists, on the other hand, have little to say for their position beyond the allegation that deficiency of evidence is a reason with them for disbelief.

Q. 97.—Is there any good in faith?

A. 97.—There is good in faith in the cheering reflection that we are not forlorn victims of purposeless accident or fate, but the objects of care to a cognisant, potent, and benevolent

Being; that our conduct has further importance than that of the visible and immediate consequences, namely, as affecting the life and progress of our own community, and even of the world at large, in the direction in which God himself is taking it; and that the activity of our lifetime need not come to naught even for ourselves, but that although moth and rust may consume, and thieves break through and steal, treasures laid up on earth, we may lay up for ourselves treasure in the heavens that faileth not.

Q. 98.—Is there any power in faith?

A. 98.—One may accomplish much by faith which one would hardly attempt without it, as lacking that kind of confidence which is necessary for the hope of success. Jesus said:—

"Verily, I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." (Mt. xvii. 20.)

Q. 99.—Is there any virtue in faith?

A. 99.—There is virtue in faith, because, as it increases the power of effort to do good, so also it increases the motive. By faith, whereby the sacred nature of the relationship between every man and his fellow men is assumed, any inclination to do right and to do good, which might exist without it is greatly strengthened. This is so much the case, that if blasphemy is to be accounted the most grievous sin, then a sincere profession of faith may be accounted the greatest righteousness. There is, moreover, this fact in the nature of Christian faith, that it may be cultivated. In proportion as any man will regulate his conduct in accordance with the principles of faith, his faith will increase.

Q. 100.—Which is better—knowledge or faith?

A. 100.—Although we may naturally desire knowledge, and properly long for it, faith is the better possession as affecting the quality of our conduct in the world. If men endeavour to do not merely that which is righteous or just, but also that which is good, not in the *knowledge* but in the *faith* that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek to do His pleasure, they will do so, not mainly for the sake of certain reward, but because they are themselves good, aiming to be godlike, *i.e.*, what they conceive God to be, because they have faith in His goodness and desire to be like Him. It is just by reason of the absence of knowledge in the case, whereby a man is raised to the height of virtue by having and holding faith. He has faith, because he finds himself constituted to be virtuous; if he persevere in virtue, he will increase in faith. The good man is good because he is full of faith in goodness: the godly man is godly because he is full of faith in God.

LESSON NOTES FOR TEACHERS.

To be used with the scheme of instruction for Sunday Schools issued by the N.S.P.C.I. for 1917.

May 6th.—*An Excursion into Tyre and Sidon.* Read Mark vii. 24–37. Key text, Luke ii. 32.

1. *Among the Gentiles.* Jesus did not cross the borders of Galilee for the purpose of spreading the Gospel. He was yet fully occupied in preaching to his own people. He withdrew into Tyre and Sidon because, so far as we can tell, his outspoken attack on the Pharisees had aroused a dangerous hostility. Of the two Gentile cities mentioned, Sidon (which means "Fish-town") was a great seaport, but Tyre (which means "the Rock"), had captured its trade, and was, in our Lord's time, a rich and powerful city.

2. *The Syro-Phœnician Woman.* She had heard such wonderful reports of the great healer, that when she found him she confidently besought him to heal her daughter. Jesus, however, was so impressed with the amount of work he had still to do for the Jews (his own people), that he said he must *first* attend to them. "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." The word our Lord used for "dogs" was a friendly one, such as is applied to dogs which are household pets. That gave the woman her chance. She quietly reminded Jesus that the

house dogs get some crumbs. Her quiet answer and humble disposition revealed to Jesus another sphere of work. He healed the Gentile woman's daughter, and so became a "light unto thd Gentiles."

The *return to Galilee* (verse 31). He had to return to his own people, because he was most anxious to complete his work among them. For the most part his disciples followed his example in this. They did not go out among foreign people whilst they had any hope of converting their own. But when the Jews proved themselves unworthy, then greater efforts (especially by St. Paul) were made to spread the good tidings throughout the world. Jesus set a good example here. Far too many Christian churches are inclined to neglect work at home for the sake of missionary work. But their chief efforts should be to do all they can at home, and then it will be much easier to do good work abroad. So we as individuals must show our Christianity in our own family by doing all we can for goodness and happiness for those near at hand. Then, when we have a little kingdom of God at home, we shall be all the stronger to help bring the kingdom of God into the busy world.

May 13.—*Feeding the Multitude.* Read Mark vii. 1–10. Key text, John vi. 35.

1. *Jesus' Compassion.* An eager multitude had been with him for three days, and his kindly heart was moved by the thought that they had had nothing to eat.

2. *The Miracle.* Did Jesus actually create enough material food for four thousand people out of seven loaves and a few fishes? I think the belief that he did so is due to misunderstanding on the part of the writers of the Gospels. St. John's gospel suggests the meaning of the miracle in our Lord's words, "I am the bread of Life." What very likely happened was, that our Lord infused such a friendly and happy spirit among the multitude that, even though they had scarcely anything to eat, they felt quite satisfied. They were filled; but when the story was told afterwards, folk at once jumped to the conclusion that they were filled with earthly bread, when it was the Bread of Life that had sustained them. For elder scholars show that all these stories of feeding the multitude are very confused. All the gospels tell of the five thousand, whilst in addition, Mark and Matthew tell of the four thousand. Both these versions very likely spring from the one incident of satisfying the multitude with the Bread of Life.

3. *The Bread of Life.* When we consider how urgent is hunger, the fact that Jesus could satisfy the multitude with his *spirit* is an even greater miracle than if he had done it with *bread.* Yet it is a miracle which he constantly works, even to this day. Where the Spirit of Christ is present, a large family can make quite a happy meal with very little food. Hunger is forgotten and overcome when unselfishness and cheerfulness prevail. Many are the stories of brave men and devoted women who have gone several days without food, or even without thinking of food, in their desire to rescue, nurse, or comfort someone less fortunate than themselves. The Bread of Life is Faith, Hope, and Love.

MAY 20.—*The Great Scene at Cæsarea Philippi.* Read Mark viii. 27–38. Key text, Mark viii. 29.

1. *Cæsarea Phillipi.* This town is in the extreme north of Galilee, miles away from the chief scenes of our Lord's ministry. The country round about is rugged and grand. It was to this remote district that our Lord withdrew to have intimate talk with his disciples, because he felt that the crisis of his life had come. He had set forth on his ministry trying to turn men's hearts to the kingdom of God, and so impressed those that came near him that they had begun to say (as he well knew) great and wonderful things about him.

2. *What do men say that I am?* Men in general had not yet realised his great meaning. They saw he was great, but no greater than a John the Baptist risen from the dead, an Elijah, or one of the prophets, one or all of whom the people thought would appear before the Messiah.

3. *What do* YE *say that I am?* Unhesitatingly Peter, on behalf of the disciples, declared, "*"Thou art the Christ* (*the Messiah*). It was a great tribute to Jesus that those who knew him best thought the greatest things of him. By Messiah (Christ is the Greek word for Messiah) they meant one who, under the direct influence of God, would, like a mighty prince, rule a restored and prosperous world. (Read Dr. Carpenter's "Life in Palestine.")

4. *What did Jesus say that he was?* In the first place he told them not to say anything about his being the Messiah. His chief reason was, no doubt, that he did not agree with their notions of a Messiah. There was nothing of an earthly and worldly-minded king about Jesus. Instead, he proceeded to show them that he (the Son of Man—the name he preferred to use himself) would have to suffer and be killed before the kingdom of the Messiah would appear.

5. *Peter's rebuke.* Peter was astonished and offended at the idea of suffering and degradation being associated with the Messiah.

6. *Jesus' reply.* "Thou mindest not the things of God, but of men." The divine way of helping the world to be better was the way of self-sacrifice. He was concerned with man's eternal soul, and that could only be redeemed by his showing how he despised the things of earth. Every great follower of Christ has acted on this. He has endured all things, even death, for the sake of the eternal blessedness of man. Jesus wanted above all things to make men good. Only when they were good would the kingdom of God appear. Therefore, knowing that he who stands for goodness must suffer, he was prepared to be, not a prosperous, but a suffering Messiah. All best things are born with struggle and pain.

MAY 27. *The descent of the Holy Spirit.* Read Acts ii. 1–21. Key text, John xiv. 16.

1. *The Day of Pentecost.* The fiftieth day after Easter Sunday. Up to this day the disciples had been more or less inactive and depressed. They knew, indeed, that Jesus was risen; but they had not yet learnt what the resurrection meant for them. All they knew was that their good and great Master was no longer with them to lead them about and inspire them with noble deeds and thoughts. So they were, on this occasion, quietly assembled in a room, discussing, no doubt, the apparent hopelessness of their cause. Yet there would keep rising in their minds the memory of the blessed promises he had made them, especially the promise of the gift of the Comforter.

2. *The Gift.* This is a very difficult subject, but almost all critics are now agreed that the descent of tongues of fire should be taken as a picturesque way of describing the entrance of the Christ Spirit into the hearts of the disciples. *For elder scholars,* mention the fact that the possession of the Holy Spirit was believed by many, *e.g.*, St. Paul, to show itself by what was called "speaking with tongues," which meant excited, inarticulate shoutings and groanings. But St. Paul had the good sense to insist that simple, helpful exhortation was also a proof of the Spirit's presence.

3. *The surprise of the crowd.* This was due either to the fact that the disciples "spake with tongues" in the Pauline sense, or else that they spoke of such wonderful things that all were impressed. The idea that they spoke in such a way that their speech was heard in all sorts of foreign languages is again only to be taken as a picturesque expression. What they really spoke, I believe, was the language of the heart, and this language is most easily understood. The disciples had received the Spirit of Comfort, and this made them comforters of their fellow-men.

4. *The meaning of Whitsuntide* is briefly this—Although only those who lived near Jesus could be comforted by him in the flesh, yet, now that he is not in the flesh, his Spirit descends on every heart that opens for it. The Spirit of Comfort abides in the world for ever. We prove that Christ has comforted us by spreading the Spirit of Comfort among all those we meet.

E. H. P.

ULSTER UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION.

On Sunday, April 1st, the Annual Sermons on behalf of the Ulster Unitarian Christian Association were preached in the First Presbyterian Church, Belfast, by Rev. J. J. Magill, B.A., of Rademon.

The Annual Meeting of the Association was held on Monday evening in the Central Hall, Belfast. Prior to the business proceedings tea was served to the friends assembled. Afterwards the chair was taken by Mr. Bowman Malcolm, M. INST. C.E. Despite severe weather, the attendance was good. Among those present, in addition to the speakers and a number of ladies, were Revs. W. G. Anderson, G. V. Crook, F. Woolley, E. H. Pickering, B.A., Joseph Worthington (Torquay), Dr. Gawin Orr, Messrs. Walter Roberts, Thomas Roberts, William Hewitt, and others.

After the singing of a hymn, and prayer by Rev. W. Weatherall, Rev. G. J. Slipper (honorary secretary) read the Annual Report, which stated that there had been a steady inquiry at their Depository for literature explanatory of their principles. They again bore testimony to the services of their agent, Mr. E. Gordon. The re-inauguration of the Postal Mission was before the Committee ; as soon as conditions improved an effort would be made to revive this useful agency. The Committee, while soliciting the continued help of subscribers and emphasising the need of new subscribers to take the places of good friends who had passed onward, gratefully acknowledged the receipt of a sum of £50 from an anonymous friend of the Association, per Mr. W. H. Niall Nelson, and thanked the local treasurers and collectors for their services. They recorded with regret the death during the year of several staunch friends of the Association, including the Right Hon. Thomas Andrews, of Comber ; Mr. James Carr, Mr. James M'Williams, Captain W. Haughton-Smyth, of Banbridge, and Miss L. Orr, of Clonmel.

Mr. C. J. M'Kisack (honorary treasurer) presented the financial statement, which was of a satisfactory character.

The Chairman, in moving the adoption of the reports and a vote of thanks to the local treasurers and collectors, said to collect for any object except war matters at present was a very difficult task, and they were much indebted to those who had assisted in this direction.

Rev. M. Watkins, seconding, said while they had every reason to be proud of the traditions of the past, it was in their hands to do their duty in the present. There was too much tendency to regard themselves as members of individual congregations, rather than of the Church in which all congregations formed integral parts. The future of their Church lay with the young people, and if they were not regular in their attendance at public worship, the prospect would not be a bright one. The reports were adopted.

Mr. Hugh Erskine moved, and Mr. William M'Robert seconded, a resolution of thanks to Rev. J. J. Magill, B.A., for his able and impressive sermons in aid of the Association. The motion was cordially passed.

Rev. A. Gordon, M.A., in moving a resolution of adhesion to the principles and objects of the Association as defined in its rules, laid especial stress on the fact that these principles were positive and affirmative. Their aim was not the promotion of an antagonism, but the upholding of faith and the diffusion of truth. He pleaded for a wise and sympathetic consideration of the position and difficulties of other religionists, and for co-operation in the Christian work of realising on earth the features of the Kingdom of God.

Rev. H. J. Rossington, M.A., B.D., in seconding the resolution, gave some interesting particulars of the way in which Unitarians, accused of denying Christ, had shown that, far from this, they were following his example and rendering homage to his spirit. Unitarians had a great work before them, and needed to be united for its prosecution. The resolution was carried by acclamation.

Rev. A. Gordon, M.A., having been called to the second chair, a vote of thanks to Mr. Bowman Malcolm for his able chairmanship, and to the ladies for the provision of the tea, was warmly carried on the motion of Mr. Harold Thomas, seconded by Mr. Robert McCrum.

Rev. G. J. Slipper moved, and Rev. W. Weatherall seconded, a resolution of sympathy with Rev. J. A. Kelly, their indefatigable honorary secretary, of whose presence they had been deprived at this meeting by his doctor's orders.

The proceedings were closed by the singing of a hymn, followed by the benediction.

Reports.

Crumlin.—The Annual Meeting of the congregation was held on Monday evening, 5th March, 1917, in the church school-room. The evening was unfortunately very wet and stormy, and this accounted for a smaller attendance than would otherwise have been the case; the congregation and committee were, however, well represented. The meeting opened with hymn and prayer, and the usual congregational business was transacted. The secretaries' and treasurer's reports were adopted, and the church officers and committee for the ensuing year were appointed. Business over, a very enjoyable tea was served by the ladies of the congregation, and this was followed by a programme of songs and recitations, in which the following took part:—Mr. Christie, Mrs. Aicken, Miss Logan, Messrs. F. Manderson, Wm. C. Hamilton, W. J. M'Clurg, who recited joyfully and well, and Rev. S. E. Bowen, Misses Manderson and Logan, and Mrs. Bowen assisting at the piano.

* * *

Larne and Kilwaughter.—On the evening of Monday, 2nd ult., another very successful entertainment in connection with our Band of Hope was given in the school-room. The proceedings opened with singing and prayer, Miss Moore presiding at the piano, after which a suitable address was delivered by the Minister. Mr. Frank Wright, Superintendent of Larne Sunday School, read the minutes of last meeting, and offered facilities for new members to append their signatures. A very pleasant programme was then presented to the audience, the items of which were as follow:—Chorus by children of the Sunday School, song by Miss Mundell, mandoline solo by Mr. Crooks (encore), duett by Miss Netta Austin and Mr. M. Mundell (repeated), song by Miss Madge Steele, gramaphone selections by Mr. Frank Wright, song by a very youthful but most promising young lady, Miss Martha Huxley, pianoforte solo (encored) by Mr. Hay, song by Miss Netta Austin, reading by Miss Rosa Canning, mandoline solo by Mr. Crooks (encored) song by Miss Mundell, and chorus by children. The accompaniments were played by Miss Moore, Miss Canning, and Mr. Hay with culture and finish; the songs, duett, etc., rendered most pleasingly; Mr. Wright's contributions by gramaphone of a much higher class than usually heard from such instruments; while Mr. Crooks on the mandoline, and Mr. Hay on the piano, were very inspiriting. Mr. Kennedy, in summing up the proceedings of the evening, and acknowledging the services of all and sundry, made special acknowledgment of the pleasure afforded by Messrs. Hay and Crooks. The meeting was well attended, though the evening was snowy.

* * *

Moneyrea.—A very successful concert was given by the scholars of the Lyttle Memorial School, on Friday evening, March 23rd. The manager, Mr. A. K. Stewart, presided. In his remarks Mr. Stewart expressed his thanks for the ready response which had been made by the parents and friends of the scholars. As a result of the entertainment the school would again be placed in a sound financial position. It was free from debt. The programme was an exceedingly interesting one, music, sketches, and drill being given in a delightful manner,

loud applause greeting the children from the audience. The school was filled almost to capacity. Our thanks are due to Mr. Millen and Miss M'Clune for their work in training the scholars, and for the excellent manner in which the programme was arranged.

* * *

Templepatrick.—On Saturday evening, 7th April, the Boy Scouts and Wolf Cubs gave an entertainment in Roughfort National School in aid of their troop funds. The room was packed, and the audience greatly enjoyed the songs, recitations, Highland sword dances, physical exercises, and short plays given by the boys themselves without outside help. The ladies of the Roughfort Sunday School kindly provided tea for the boys at the end of the performance. This troop of scouts and pack of cubs were formed last year by Mrs. John Campbell, of Castle Upton, and now number thirty boys of the Templepatrick village and district. The clubroom in Castle Upton is provided with suitable literature and games, and is open daily. The troop meets twice weekly for training.

* *

Unity Guild.—On Wednesday evening, April 11th, the Annual Meeting was held in the Central Hall, with Mr. Hugh Erskine in the chair. Owing, probably, to the dreadfully inclement weather, the attendance was small. The Annual Report and Statement of Accounts as presented and adopted showed that the Guild continues to supply a much-felt need in our churches in and around Belfast; also that the members are not indifferent to the various charitable demands of these days. To the U.V.F. Hospital a sum of £10 was disbursed; to the Y.M.C.A. funds, £2 5s. 6d.; and to the Children's Hospital £1 8s. 0d. The Rev. J. A. Kelly, of Dunmurry, was unanimously chosen President for the ensuing year; and it was a matter of deep regret that the effects of his recent indisposition prevented his being present at the meeting. Mr. G. J. Hill, Mr. H. B. Hunter, and Rev. M. Watkins were chosen respectively hon. treasurer, hon, auditor, and hon. secretary, whilst the following were elected to the Committee:—Misses I. Campbell, B.A.; A. F. Montgomery, M. Neill, M. Patterson, Younger, G. N. Hill, Shanks, Messrs. A. Hunter, H. Erskine, E. R. Jackson, and Revs. G. L. Phelps, E. H. Pickering, M.A. The list of the summer excursions as adopted is as follows:—Comber on May 19th, Ballynahinch (Rademon) June 23rd, Dunmurry 21st, Moira, September 8th. A programme of music and reading, in which Mr. E. V. Core, the hon. secretary, Mr. E. Gordon, and Miss Shanks took part, terminated the proceedings.

MARRIAGE.

GREEN—PULLIN—March 21st, by Special Licence, at the residence of the bride's father, by the Rev. J. A. Miskimmin, B.A., Robert Newnham Green R.N., fourth son of Garnham Fisher Green, Dublin, to Margaret Stewart, younger daughter of William Blackwood Pullin, Altmore Street, Glenarm.

DEATH.

BROWN—On April 15th, 1917, Eliza, the wife of Robert Brown of Glastry, aged 67. Interred April 17 at the Burial Ground, Ballyhalbert.

HART.—At Secon, Ballymoney, 30th March, 1917, James Hart. Buried in the old church burying-ground, 2nd April.

MERCER.—April 7th, at her residence, 16 Meadowbank Street, Belfast, Elizabeth, widow of the late John Mercer. Her remains were interred in the family burying-ground, Dromore Unitarian Church, on Monday, April 9th.

He prayeth well who loveth well,
Both man and bird and beast;
He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us
He made and loveth all.

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